

**Water/Wastewater Commissioners’  
Meeting Minutes  
January 17, 2012**

Present: Robert E. Courage, Chairman  
Michael E. Putnam, Vice-Chairman  
Dale A. White, Member  
David Boucher  
Evelyn Gendron

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Courage called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Non-Public Session (RSA 91-A:3) (Land):**

At 6:03 p.m., Vice-Chairman Putnam made the motion to go into Non-Public Session for the purpose of discussing land, and polled Chairman Courage, and Commissioner White. Commissioner White seconded the motion and all voted in favor. At 6:14 p.m. Chairman Courage made the motion to end the non-public session, seconded by Vice-Chairman Putnam and all voted in favor. Chairman Courage made no announcements.

**Decisions:**

Approval of Final Minutes – Commissioner White made the motion to rescind the approved minutes of the December 20, 2011 Board of Commissioners’ meeting, which were originally approved during the January 3, 2011 meeting, for the purpose of inserting amended information provided for enhancing clarification by Chairman Courage. Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Commissioner White then made the motion to approve the amended minutes of the December 20, 2011 Board of Commissioners’ meeting. Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Commissioner White then made the motion to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2012 Board of Commissioners’ meeting. Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion.

Water Utilities Department Website – Commissioner White asked that the meeting minutes for October 2011 appear on the website to provide valuable information relevant to the proposed 2012 sewer rate increase hearing.

Water Department Budget – Vice-Chairman Putnam made the motion to increase the amount of the monthly installment from the budget to the Water Capital Reserve Fund (account 69002-581050) from \$11,000.00 monthly to \$15,000.00 monthly, beginning in February 2012. Commissioner White seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

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2012 Water Utilities Budget – Superintendent Boucher requested the commissioners’ official approval of the 2012 budget prior to the public hearing. Commissioner White said that Superintendent Boucher did a good job bringing the final 2012 budget numbers below the 2011 budget, and that he understands that the reason is that many upcoming 2012 projects are lower-cost projects. As to the 3% wage increase, Commissioner White said that he feels everyone deserves a raise, and that he’d said this as recently as last week. Last year, the Water Utilities non-union employees received a 1-1/2% increase while the Town Hall non-union employees did not, and if the Water Utilities employees receive a one to one-and-a-half percent increase this year, it would equal what Town Hall will be proposing, but if we give a three percent increase this year, it would be a lot to bear in this economy. He said that in his own business it has been at least four years, if not five years, since he was able to give his employees a raise due to the economy. He feels that if there is an increase in the 2012 payroll budget that the increase can only be for merit, as opposed to an across-the-board increase, and that three percent increases are uncommon. Superintendent Boucher said increases are performance-based, union and non-union. Commissioner White said that it is an unpopular conversation, everyone wants to receive more, and he recognizes that all of our personal costs of living, for example, fuel and electricity, have gone up. Chairman Courage said we all are in the same boat. Superintendent Boucher explained that if the budget gets passed, the commissioners reserve the right to give any number under what has been approved, and that the number can be changed prior to going before the Budget Advisory Committee, or before the Town meeting. Vice-Chairman Putnam said that we don’t need to change it at all, since the Water Utilities budget is enterprise-based and that the town vote on this department’s budget is a courtesy vote; it follows the same process of preparation, presentation, and explanation, mirroring the town’s process. Commissioner White said that for the record he is not against a raise and that he is not against three percent, because cost of living expenses are higher, but may be too high considering the combined increases of 2011 and 2012. Chairman Courage said that this may be a weak argument on his part, but that he would like to point out that the Town had a wage increase in their 2011 budget request but it was defeated at Town Meeting, while the Water Utilities budget passed. Vice-Chairman Putnam agreed that the Town tried to include the wage increase but a default budget was the final result. Chairman Courage said that if the Town’s had passed and the Water Utilities budget had failed, the Town would have given the increase, and that he had thought long and hard as to whether the commissioners should give the wage increase and he had asked Town Administrator Scaife as to whether the wage increase should be given and he had said “absolutely; the budget had been approved.” Chairman Courage added that whether an increase should be given in the 2012 Water Utilities budget, and whether the Selectmen included an increase in their 2012 budget for the voters to consider, or whether the commissioners might prefer to make an adjustment to the amount of the 2012 Water Utilities budget, or give nothing, the commission can do any of these options, and pointed out that the wage increase would begin in April 2012. Commissioner White said that he would like to reward the people who work hard. Chairman Courage said that he didn’t recommend changing the budget figures this evening, and that the wage increase discussion could continue another time, unless Commissioner White would like to amend the budget this evening, because we need to have a budget for tomorrow evening’s 7:30 p.m. Budget Advisory Committee meeting. Chairman Courage asked Superintendent Boucher how he arrived at a 2.25% payroll increase. Mr. Boucher replied that 3% is applied to the annual salary amount but since the raise is factored in as of April 1<sup>st</sup>, it equates to a pro-rated amount of the April – December increase to the annual budget. Vice-Chairman Putnam said that the increase percentage does not amount to huge dollars and feels that the budget should remain the way it is. Chairman Courage pointed out that there should be a fair amount of discussion at the February 4<sup>th</sup> Deliberative session since both the union and non-union members would like wage increases, unlike the low attendance at last night’s public budgetary meeting. Commissioner White said that, all things considered, that it would be better to not

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change the budget at this time, and to revisit the discussion if our budget gets approved as presented. Chairman Courage made the motion to approve the 2012 Sewer Fund Budget in the amount of \$1,693,966 and the 2012 Water Fund Budget in the amount of \$1,361,299 as prepared by Superintendent Boucher. Commissioner White seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

### **Discussion/Information Items:**

Curtis Well River Crossing – Chairman Courage said that he had asked Superintendent Boucher to add this topic to tonight's agenda as he has been thinking to have Wright-Pierce move forward to begin the engineering and permit process in seeking competitive bid pricing this winter to bring new electrical and communication conduits across the Souhegan River, as opposed to delaying this work until spring for the Curtis Well River Crossing. Vice-Chairman Putnam said that the capital improvement funds are available. Commissioner White said that he had recommended increasing the size of the conduits from three 2" to three 4", since the \$6,000 difference in price is not much considering how little you can put into a 2" line. Vice-Chairman Putnam noted that one line will contain low voltage, and one line will contain bundled communication wires, and one will be a spare.

Commissioner White made the motion to authorize Superintendent Boucher to contact Mr. Chris Berg to request a detailed, competitive bid package for the Commission's approval; Wright-Pierce will perform the engineering work necessary for adding new conduit under the Souhegan River, from the Control Building to the Curtis Well field, with the work to be done by a directional boring firm. Funds will be withdrawn from the Capital Reserve Fund for this project. Vice-Chairman Putnam seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Curtis Well Field Update – Superintendent Boucher said that D. L. Maher was on-site cleaning Well #1, and the current specific drawdown capacity was at 30 gallons per foot while their goal is to reach 32 to 34 gallons. They expected to have the well back on-line by the middle of next week. Chairman Courage said he was pleased to hear from Mr. Boucher that many of the short term items on the list prepared back in October 2011 by Mr. Berg and is being done by in-house personnel.

Septage Receiving Facility – Superintendent Boucher apprised the commissioners with recent progress. He said three payment requests have been paid and that Stantec is reviewing a fourth pay request for approval. Vice-Chairman Putnam asked if the area inside the plastic wrap is being kept warm. Mr. Boucher said yes, by Ciardelli, and invited the commissioners to tour the facility under construction as long as they wear a hard hat. The project is going smoothly, with Seth Potter of Stantec often present on-site and Dennis Lucia is the Weston & Sampson Superintendent. Commissioner White said he toured the facility last week.

Proposed Sewer Rate Hearing – Superintendent Boucher said that he canceled the tentative January 26<sup>th</sup> hearing date until after the Deliberative and Town Meetings. A rate increase should be implemented on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Courage said that Jack Sheehy, Director of Financial Operations accepted the invitation to attend the Sewer Rate Hearing, once it is scheduled, to explain figures and calculations. Commissioner White said that, in theory, the increase is to off-set the lost revenue due to increased expenses necessary to operate and maintain our sewer system; income is not covering expenses. Chairman Courage explained that Mr. Sheehy said the shortfalls the past few years have been paid out of the fund balance, and that one of the Commission's 2012 goals is enhancing our odor control system,

and to focus on options other than composting, but in order to get away from composting, the sludge cake would have to be made drier than occurs with the current belt filter press, an open-aired system, which would require an in-vessel dewatering unit, which treats sludge unexposed to air until it falls into the back of a truck. Mr. Boucher said that the belt filter press system would be retained as a back-up method. Although Mr. Boucher still needs to crunch the numbers, it is known that composting is expensive and the in-vessel system would reduce man-hours.

Meter Accuracy Testing Results – Jim Young, Water Foreman and Jessica Hardwick, Billing Clerk explained progress made in 2006 for testing large water meters, and discussed the pro's and con's of whether the larger meter replacement expenses should be borne by the town or the homeowners, meter replacement according to manufacturer recommendations, enforcement, etc. Discussion followed without decision; the town attorney should not be consulted on this topic at this time.

Activities Report – Reviewed by commissioners.

**Future Appointments/Meetings:**

The next Water and Wastewater Commissioners' meeting will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2012 at the Water Utilities Department, 564 Nashua Street.

**Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn the regular meeting was made by Vice-Chairman Putnam at 7:34 p.m. Commissioner White seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Evelyn B. Gendron

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Robert E. Courage, Chairman

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Date

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Michael E. Putnam, Vice-Chairman

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Date

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Dale A. White, Commissioner

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Date